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Special Event Grants Available December 12, 2008 Application Deadline

(HELENA) – Governor Brian Schweitzer announces that Montana communities, organizations and tribal governments sponsoring or planning annual ongoing events are invited to apply for \$80,000 in state tourism grant funds available from the Montana Department of Commerce, Travel Montana Special Events Grant Program (SEGP). The SEGP application deadline is December 12, 2008.

“Montana’s myriad of special events help to showcase our great state’s authentic people and experiences. These grants offer an excellent opportunity for our non-profit organizations to enhance these events in their communities and introduce a portion of Montana’s 10 million annual visitors to their main street businesses,” said Governor Schweitzer.

A major change to the grant criteria this year provides that *any* Montana event is eligible to apply for funding. In addition, funds must be used to advertise and promote the event to target markets outside a 100-mile radius of the event site. Grants will be awarded based on a 3-tier approach that ranks communities according to population. The grants are designed to be matching funds for non-profit organizations involved in developing new annual events as well as enhancing existing community-based tourism festivals and events.

“In revising the program, we recognized the need to not only assist new emerging events but provide the opportunity for our communities to enhance their ‘hallmark’ events that have become important economic drivers in their communities,” said Anthony Preite, Director of the Montana Department of Commerce.

For more information about the SEGP, or to request an application, contact Carol Crockett at Travel Montana, 406-841-2796. SEGP application materials can be downloaded from Travel Montana's Intranet site: www.travelmontana.mt.gov/forms.

The SEGP funds are provided by a 4% state tourism "bed tax" which is assessed on the lodging price of all accommodations across Montana, including campgrounds. Tourism and recreation is one of Montana's leading industries. In 2007, Montana hosted over 10.6 million non-resident visitors who spent over \$3 billion during their visits. Over 33,000 jobs are directly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in \$710 million in total personal income for Montana residents.

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